

July 22, 2026

The Honorable Susan Collins, Chair
The Honorable Patty Murray, Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable Tom Cole, Chair
The Honorable Rosa DeLauro, Ranking Member
House Committee on Appropriations

Dear Chair Collins, Vice Chair Murray, Chair Cole, and Ranking Member DeLauro:

On behalf of the [National Science Teaching Association \(NSTA\)](http://www.nsta.org) and our tens of thousands of science educators across the United States, **we thank you for your continued commitment to supporting educational opportunity and scientific excellence through the annual appropriations process.** As Congress completes work on the Fiscal Year (FY) 2027 appropriations bills, **we respectfully urge you to provide robust funding for federal investments that strengthen K–12 science education, support the nation's science teaching workforce, and ensure every student has access to a high-quality science education.**

America's economic competitiveness, national security, public health, and technological leadership increasingly depend upon a workforce equipped with strong science knowledge and problem-solving skills. From biotechnology and advanced manufacturing to artificial intelligence, clean energy, agriculture, and national defense, nearly every sector of our economy relies on scientific innovation and discovery. Preparing the next generation of scientists, engineers, technicians, healthcare professionals, and informed citizens begins in elementary and secondary classrooms, where students develop curiosity, scientific reasoning, and foundational knowledge that will serve them throughout their lives.

Unfortunately, schools across the country continue to face significant challenges recruiting and retaining qualified science educators. The Learning Policy Institute estimates that more than 400,000 teaching positions nationwide are either vacant or filled by teachers who are not fully certified, with STEM fields—including science—remaining among the most persistent shortage areas. Likewise, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) has found that public schools continue to experience difficulty hiring qualified science teachers, particularly in the physical sciences. These shortages limit student access to rigorous science instruction precisely when the nation's demand for STEM talent continues to grow.

At the same time, science instruction has received less emphasis in many elementary schools over the past two decades. Because science is not included in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act's school

accountability framework in the same way as reading and mathematics, many schools devote less instructional time to science, particularly in the early grades. National surveys have consistently documented that elementary students receive substantially less science instruction than reading and mathematics, while the National Academies has concluded that early science learning is critical to developing scientific literacy, strengthening problem-solving skills, and sustaining student interest in STEM careers. The result is fewer opportunities for students to develop scientific curiosity during the years when interest in STEM subjects is often first cultivated. This has implications not only for the future workforce, but also for preparing all Americans to evaluate scientific information, make informed decisions, and participate thoughtfully in civic life.

Federal investments cannot solve these challenges alone, but they provide essential support that enables states, school districts, institutions of higher education, and educators to strengthen science teaching and learning. Accordingly, we respectfully urge Congress to provide strong FY 2027 funding in the Labor, Health and Human Services and Education spending bill for:

- **Title II, Part A** of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, which supports the recruitment, preparation, retention, and professional learning of educators, including science teachers.
- **Title IV, Part A**, which helps school districts provide students with access to a well-rounded education, including high-quality science, STEM, computer science, engineering, and environmental education opportunities.
- **Title IV, Part B (21st Century Community Learning Centers)**, which expands access to high-quality afterschool and summer STEM learning experiences that reinforce classroom instruction and inspire future interest in science.
- **Title I**, which helps ensure that students in high-poverty communities have access to qualified educators and high-quality instructional opportunities, including in science.
- Other federal investments that strengthen educator preparation, improve educator well-being and retention, support effective school leadership, and create healthy learning environments where teachers and students can succeed.

We also urge Congress to continue making strong investments, via the FY 2027 Commerce, Justice, Science spending bill, in the National Science Foundation, including the STEM Education Directorate, which supports research on how students learn science, develops evidence-based instructional practices, prepares and supports STEM educators, broadens participation in STEM fields, and strengthens pathways into STEM careers. NSF-funded research has improved science teaching and learning in classrooms across the nation while

informing educator preparation, curriculum development, assessment, and professional learning. Continued support for programs that inspire student interest in science, foster excellence in STEM education, connect research to classroom practice, and prepare the next generation of innovators is essential to maintaining the nation's long-term scientific leadership.

Federal investments in science education yield benefits that extend far beyond individual classrooms. They prepare a skilled workforce, strengthen American competitiveness, promote innovation, improve public understanding of science, and ensure that every student—regardless of geography or background—can succeed in an increasingly science- and technology-driven world.

Thank you for your leadership and for your consideration of these priorities as you complete the FY 2027 appropriations process. NSTA stands ready to serve as a resource as Congress works to strengthen the nation's investment in science education. If you have any questions about NSTA or its federal policy priorities, please contact Kate Falk at kfalk@nsta.org.

Sincerely,



Dr. Donna L. Governor

President 2026-2027

National Science Teaching Association